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ABSTRACT

This report, one of a series of country studies on higher education and employment particularly in continuing professional education, looks at recent developments in Germany in distance education. In particular the study compares its development in the Federal Republic of Germany and the former German Democratic Republic. The first of two main sections covers the historical development of systems of higher education in both countries as well as a look at the process of harmonization between the two German higher education systems after reunification of the two German states. It is suggested that in the old Federal Republic, regular university studies will probably continue to dominate while in areas that were the old German Democratic Republic, distance education (already in place and accepted) will be developed further. Also compared in the first section are study courses and study materials, information and dissemination, organization of studies, cooperation among institutions, legal issues, and funding. A second section gives an outlook and recommendations on potential developments in the unified Germany. This section makes recommendations on study materials and courses, information and dissemination, organization of studies, cooperation, and educational and legal policy issues. (JB)

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HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT: THE CHANGING RELATIONSHIP

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

COUNTRY REPORT - GERMANY

FLEXIBLE ORGANISATION OF LEARNING AND DISTANCE STUDY IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY AND IN THE FORMER GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

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Flexible Organisation of Learning and Distance Study
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HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT: THE CHANGING RELATIONSHIP

Project iii): Higher Education and Employment: Recent Developments in Continuing Professional Education

COUNTRY REPORT - GERMANY

This contribution is part of a series of studies prepared in the framework of the OECD Education Committee activity on Higher Education and Employment: The Changing Relationship. It deals with one of the three main topics covered by this activity, Higher Education and Employment: Recent Developments in Continuing Professional Education. Together with other country studies on this topic, it provides the background information for the preparation of a Secretariat general report that will be published by the OECD in 1992.

Country studies and general reports are also being made available for the other two projects included under this activity: The Flows of Graduates from Higher Education and their Entry into Working Life; Higher Education and Employment: The Case of the Humanities and Social Sciences.

The present contribution on Flexible Organisation of Learning and Distance Study in the Federal Republic of Germany and in the former German Democratic Republic has been written by H.J. Back and J. Fichter of the Institute for Development, Planning and Factual Research, University of Hanover, and W.D. Heider of the German Ministry of Education and Science. The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily commit the national authorities concerned or the Organisation.

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Contents

		Page
1.	A comparison of distance study in the Federal Republic of Germany and in the former German Democratic Republic	1
1.1	Development of distance study	1
	- in the Federal Republic of Germany	1
	- in the former GDR	3
	- The future	4
1.2	Study courses and study materials	5
1.3	Information and dissemination	8
1.4	Organization of studies	9
1.5	Cooperation	9
1.6	Legal issues	11
1.7	Funding	12
2.	Outlook and recommendations	13
2.1	Study materials and study courses	14
2.2	Information and dissemination	17
2.3	Organization of studies	17
2.4	Cooperation	19
2.5	Educational policy issues and legal issues	20

1. A comparison of distance study in the Federal Republic of Germany and in the former German Democratic Republic

1.1 Development of distance study

In the Federal Republic of Germany until October 1990

Distance study in the **Federal Republic of Germany** was developed within a relatively short period of time - essentially since the beginning of the 1970s - with the intention of making it an equal part in the whole sector of the university education. This process was characterized by the following factors:

- intensified reform efforts in study and teaching,
- the great increase in student numbers resulting from the entry of high-birthrate age groups into higher education institutions and, at the same time increased participation in education as well as the decision to keep higher education institutions "open" also in times of greater student numbers.
- the development of new communications and learning media (resulting, inter alia, in the project "Fernstudium im Medienverbund (FIM)"/"mixed-media distance study"),
- an increasing demand for continuing education both in working life and in society as well as
- a pent-up demand for the development of distance study compared with foreign countries.

The present situation of distance study in the Federal Republic of Germany is characterized by a relatively small number of offers but a rather wide spectrum of providers. There are

- the FernUniversität at Hagen (Hagen distance university), which is a Land institution that has covered the whole of North Rhine-Westphalia with a network of study centres and has established also a few other study centres outside North Rhine-Westphalia which cooperate with traditional universities requiring student attendance,

- a private, government-recognized Fachhochschule, the "Hochschule für Berufstätige" ("University for People Who Are Gainfully Employed") of the Akademikergesellschaft für Erwachsenenfortbildung (AKAD) at Rendsburg,

- the Deutsches Institut für Fernstudien (DIFF) (German Institute for Distance Study) at Tübingen (Baden-Württemberg), which develops materials for distance study and conducts supporting research,

- the Fernstudieninstitut der Technischen Fachhochschule Berlin (Institute for Distance Study of the Technical Fachhochschule Berlin), which focuses exclusively on continuing vocational education,

- several Zentrale Einrichtungen für Weiterbildung und Fernstudium (Central Institutions for Continuing Education and Distance Study) at regular universities and

- individual departments and individual teachers at regular higher education institutions which/who offer study courses including distance study opportunities.

The role of distance study in the Federal Republic of Germany still differs from one region to another, in particular as a result of the federal character of the education system; most participants in distance studies live in the northern part of the Federal Republic of Germany. As a component of higher education distance studies are of relatively minor significance in the Federal Republic of Germany: Only about 3% of all normal students[1] are enrolled at a distance university. The percentage of distance students taking a final examination is also relatively low; this is above all the result of the weekly study load of about 20 hours and the long duration of studies alongside gainful employment (eight to ten years). However, the percentage of those passing

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[1] normal students meaning here students aiming to earn a degree, diploma, MA or the like.

a final examination in some disciplines, for example economics, is quite comparable with that at regular higher education institutions.

Since the mid-1970s the importance of academic (occupation-related) continuing education has been increasing as a result of the increasingly rapid pace of technological change and the accompanying economic and social changes. Since the beginning of the 1980s regular institutions of higher education have increasingly been providing graduate studies and continuing education studies, including also distance study opportunities.

The Framework Act for Higher Education and the Land University Acts name distance study and continuing education among the tasks of higher education institutions. However, it is essentially left to the individual teacher at a higher education institution to decide whether or not to commit him- or herself to this area in the framework of his/her tasks.

In the former GDR

Distance study in the former **German Democratic Republic** was developed in the 1950s in order to satisfy the pent-up demand for technical qualifications among management staff in companies. Since the 1970s it has taken on the function of the second educational route. It is characterized by many different forms in initial training and in continuing education. In the former GDR - as in most cases in the Federal Republic - distance study is usually pursued alongside occupational work. Provision there includes a "Spezielles Fernstudium" ("Special distance study") of three years' duration, which offers continuing education to particularly talented graduates of advanced technical schools (engineers, economists) to enable them to earn a university diploma; in addition, there is a "Frauensonderstudium" ("Special study course for women") which provides major aids and preferential treatment to women pursuing studies.

Providing distance education was one of the statutory tasks of regular higher education institutions in the GDR, it was nothing special in the overall system of teaching. Thus distance education plays a much greater role in the former GDR than it does in the Federal Republic. It has been broadly implemented and has gained a high degree of acceptance. About 10% of all normal students at higher education institutions in the former GDR (not including participants in the "Spezielles Fernstudium") are off-campus students.

Since the 1960s academic continuing education has been an integral part of higher education in the former GDR. It includes also post-graduate studies in the form of distance education. For would-be participants in continuing education courses as well as other academic programmes and evening classes are provided in addition. Like distance education, continuing education is one of the tasks of every teacher at a higher education institution.

Higher education institutions in the former GDR possess the necessary infrastructure for distance education and continuing education. Universities have set up directorates for continuing education and there are also consultation and advisory centres.

The future

The process of harmonization between the two German higher education systems after establishment of the unification of the two German states will - in both East and West Germany - change the significance of academic distance education. In the old Federal Republic, regular university studies will continue to preponderate; in view of the great burden to be borne by higher education institutions it will be difficult to establish flexible and innovative forms of teaching and learning, including distance education.

Distance education in the GDR, in its proven and accepted form, will have to be further developed; in future it will have to hold its own in a new environment which includes:

- the newly established federative structures (the cultural sovereignty of the Länder in the former GDR) and

- a changed legal and economic environment including i.a. the plurality of teaching, the admission restrictions at higher education institutions and competition among them as well as the orientation of society towards the market economy.

On the whole it is to be expected that independent study courses, with their flexibility and freedom in terms of methods, contents and pacing, will in future increase in significance, in particular in the area of academic vocational continuing education. The demand for continuing education is great in the former GDR and will continue to grow in the coming years.

In this process the future role of distance education within the all-German higher education system could be strengthened by establishing a more comprehensive institutional and curricular framework.

1.2 Study courses and study materials

In the Federal Republic of Germany there exist a number of different possibilities to achieve goals of training and continuing education through distance education.

The number of subjects offered by distance teaching organizations is limited. There are both private and public providers. Provision ranges from simple continuing education courses to study courses concluding with a diploma examination.

While distance teaching (at general and vocational school level) is mainly provided by private distance teaching organizations, academic distance education (at higher education level) is predominantly provided by public or government-recognized institutions.

Diplomas at higher education level can currently be acquired only at two institutions: on the one hand through the FernUniversität at Hagen (in mathematics, economics, informatics and electrical engineering). This university also provides a series of continuing education courses plus the possibility, in some subject combinations, to earn an M.A.

On the other hand, the Hochschule für Berufstätige (University for People Who Are Gainfully Employed), Rendsburg - a government-recognized Fachhochschule - offers three study courses to prepare students for the Diplom-Betriebswirt (applied economies) (FH), the Diplom-Wirtschaftsingenieur (business administration) (FH) and Diplom-Wirtschaftsinformatiker (applied informatics) (FH).

Aside from the educational courses offered by the higher education institutions specifically oriented to distance education, there are also a number of regular higher education institutions and distance education centres as well as the Deutsches Institut für Fernstudien at the University of Tübingen, which provide distance education opportunities for academic continuing education. However, only some of them are available to everyone and most of them are implemented in cooperation with or by regional education institutions.

In the former GDR, in contrast, there are courses in more than a hundred subjects available, although some of them are highly specialized. In particular, the technical and natural science disciplines offer a large number of distance education opportunities; nothing comparable exists in the Federal Republic.

After the establishment of German unification, study provision in the Federal Republic and in the former GDR - not only in the field of distance study - will have to be coordinated and harmonized and deficits reduced. Existing material should be made available in both parts of Germany for mutual use.

With regard to the required establishment of democratic, lawful and market-oriented structures, there is, in the former GDR, a great need for up-to-date contents which are in keeping with the new social situation, above all in the areas of

1. Social sciences (including teacher training),

2. Legal sciences

3. Business management and economics.

Interested teachers and institutions of higher education in the former GDR should be provided at short notice with relevant study materials available from West German providers in these areas. Unconventional organizational and study-oriented measures should be applied here, too. This would include the use of study materials from the Federal Republic also outside of study courses and the sharing of fees between several providers, etc. Among the target groups particularly appropriate to enjoy such short-term measures in the former GDR are above all

- teachers at schools
- university students (including participants in continuing education programmes) in the areas of legal, economic and social sciences
- teachers and academic staff in higher education
- jurists, tax and insurance experts, all types of administrative staff.

In order for teaching and learning materials from the old Federal Republic to become widely available at short notice, it would be advisable to provide them to libraries at higher education institutions and to public libraries in the GDR.

In the medium term it will be important to develop and test independent study programmes for people working in or interested to work in in-company and out-of-company continuing education.

Printed texts, as components of independent and distance study programmes, will retain their outstanding significance as teaching and learning aids. It will therefore be important, in addition to restructuring the contents, to improve didactics and the printing quality particularly of the GDR study materials. The Zentralstelle für das Hochschulfernstudium in Dresden in the former GDR (Central Agency for Academic Distance Education at Dresden) will no longer be the only institution responsible for preparing such printed material including also author coordination, printing

dissemination, etc; all these functions will soon be performed also by individual higher education institutions in the former GDR.

1.3 Information and dissemination

In the **Federal Republic** all study provision - including distance studies - available from higher education institutions are documented by the Westdeutsche Rektorenkonferenz (West German Rectors' Conference), and other distance teaching - including academic distance studies - at the Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (Federal Institute for Vocational Education, Berlin).

Continuing education opportunities are documented at supraregional[1)] and at various regional continuing education data bases as well as at the data collection centres for continuing education, fourteen of them alone in the northern German area and in Berlin. From 1990 onwards an updatable documentation "Academic continuing education" is to be established at the FernUniversität.

With its Zentralstelle für das Hochschulstudium at Dresden the former **GDR** has established an information collection and dissemination centre for distance studies. All distance education opportunities made known to it have hitherto been published regularly in the form of brochures and made available to all interested persons.

Now that the two German states have been unified, a central information and documentation agency should be established to document all distance studies and independent studies for the whole German area and, in the medium term, also for the European region; this documentation should be published at regular intervals and made available to all higher education institutions and all distance education institutions.

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1) Information system for continuing education (WIS) of the Deutscher Industrie- und Handelstag and of the Deutscher Handwerkstag at München and Augsburg; the information system "Institutions of vocational education" of the Bundesanstalt für Arbeit (Federal Employment Institute) as well as a specialized information system "Education" of the Bund-Länder Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion

In this way users and developers should be given access to the many different study opportunities offered in both parts of Germany and by European providers.

1.4 Organization of studies

In the GDR distance teaching and independent continuing education will in future be opened to all interested persons. While in the past participants in training and continuing education programmes were usually delegated and released by their employers - for up to 48 work days per year -, they will in future presumably have to pursue such educational programmes in their own time. This means that continuing education will have to be reorganized.

It is to be expected that phases of compulsory attendance will have to take place in the evening and on weekends or in the form of block releases - as is also current practice in the Federal Republic. It will, therefore, be important that, in the former GDR, a general network of multifunctional study and counselling centres is established to enable successful independent studies. Such centres, which have to be equipped with modern media, should be able to advise about all available distance study and continuing education opportunities available in the whole German area and in the long run include also providers in Europe. Existing centres in the former GDR should be restructured accordingly and new ones should be equipped to meet the new needs.

1.5 Cooperation

Various providers of distance teaching in the Federal Republic established contact with higher education institutions in the former GDR immediately after the border between the two German states was opened. Thus, the Deutsches Institut für Fernstudien (DIFF) Tübingen has made available to individual higher education institutions in the former GDR materials for general and political continuing education as well as for teacher in-service training. The FernUniversität Hagen provides in particular its study materials in the legal and economic sciences.

It has already established cooperation with a number of higher education institutions in East Germany. In addition it is endeavouring to establish study centres at East German universities. Also, providers of independent studies at West German regular higher education institutions have agreed on short-term measures with partners in the former GDR, even though initially of a partly informal character. In the medium term, however, these ventures will have to be put on a contractual basis to meet existing statutory provisions (e.g. concerning fees).

In addition there are already numerous examples of cooperation among higher education teachers, including those fields were distance teaching and regular studies supplement each other (personal consultations, guest lectures, other academic programmes, etc.).

In order to make the cooperation between distance study institutions and regular higher education institutions productive and in order to coordinate existing and future cooperative activities, it is necessary that a working group be set up to consult on

- priorities in the development of new independent study opportunities (contents, goals, teaching/learning organization for different target groups)
- pilot experiments to be carried out
- concepts for supervision and advice as well as infrastructures
- legal issues and
- financing possibilities

and to submit their results to the competent bodies for deliberation so as to contribute to the formulation of education policy.

In the medium term it would be the task of such a working group to expand cooperation beyond the all-German framework to cover the whole European region. For one thing higher education institutions offering independent studies should be involved in the work of the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU); for another this would ensure joint and more effective participation in EC promotion programmes, e.g. those lending themselves to distance teaching:

- ERASMUS (promoting the mobility of university students in Europe)
- COMETT (university-enterprise training partnerships)
- DELTA (research and development in the field of modern learning technologies)
- PETRA (European network of training initiatives through transnational partnerships)
- LINGUA (support for initial training and in-service training for teachers in connection with ERASMUS)

1.6 Legal issues

On October 3, 1990 the German Democratic Republic acceded to the Federal Republic of Germany according to Article 23 of the Basic Law. On that day the Framework Act for Higher Education of the Federal Republic of Germany became valid also for the new Länder of the former GDR. Efforts should be made for independent study opportunities/distance teaching and for continuing education to be largely included in the prospective higher education acts of the five new Länder Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, Brandenburg, Saxony-Anhalt, Saxony and Thuringia. Legal provision has to be made i.a. for:

- Promotion of distance teaching and of providers of distance education at the Länder and federal levels
- Inclusion of proven elements of the former GDR's distance studies (e.g. responsibility of higher education teachers for both attendance studies and distance teaching; retention of the "Spezielles Fernstudium")
- Financial considerations regarding the development and implementation of new independent study opportunities.

Currently legal provisions restrict the flexible utilization of distance education materials in both parts of Germany. Thus, enrolment at the FernUniversität or a distance study organization is necessary to be able to receive study materials. Furthermore copyright reasons prevent the generous utilization and development of such materials. It will have to be examined to what extent

exceptions can be made for the purpose of testing materials from one part of Germany in the other part. This holds true also for media legislation.

In the medium term provisions are required to enable the flexible use of study materials in the higher education sector. This would also include the utilization of instructional films or educational radio and television broadcasts beyond the institutions' framework.

1.7. Funding

Currently potential students from the former GDR enrolling at higher education institutions providing distance education cannot be exempted from tuition fees. In the short term and for a transitional period some providers from the old Federal Republic of Germany have introduced special regulations (reduced prices, advance financing, utilization free of charge). In the medium term, however, - not least because of the principle of equal treatment - it will be absolutely necessary to treat all students equally in terms of tuition fees.

At public higher education institutions with their general exemption from fees for normal studies, new developments of study materials can as a rule be financed only with "start-up money" provided from special funds or in the framework of pilot experiments. Experience has shown that revenue from fees is not, as a rule, sufficient for the purpose. The situation is different in the sphere of privat providers, who, depending on their market position, are able to charge considerable fees for their courses which help them cover their sometimes major investment expenditure.

It seems to make sense, i.a. in the framework of pilot experiments, to develop and test funding models for the flexible use of distance teaching materials,

e.g. promotion

- of continuing education/retraining programmes (e.g. cost reimbursement to firms for periods of absence)
- by way of company grants to participants in such programmes
- by sharing tuition fees between participants, government and companies.

The Federal Government and the Länder will have to make available additional funds for the model use of distance study (also in the framework of attendance studies).

2. Outlook and recommendations

In the following an outlook will be given and recommendations made, on potential developments in the field of distance studies and independent studies in unified Germany. The recommendations were prepared by the Institute for Development Planning and Structural Research on the basis of the findings made in the framework of its own research project "Zwischenbilanz Fernstudium" ("Distance study - an interim report"). Whether and how these recommendations can be put into practice in the short, medium or long term, requires special examination in each individual case - especially regarding funding - and coordination between the Länder. The recommendations, while quite capable of being put into practice in principle, are therefore meant initially as food for thought and as suggestions for those having to take action in the spheres concerned.

The following assumptions are made:

- The importance of teaching and learning forms allowing large-scale flexibility in terms of content and organization (independent studies and distance teaching opportunities) will increase above all in the sphere of continuing education.
- It should be one of the tasks of the teachers of all higher education institutions, departments and disciplines to develop and provide independent studies and distance studies; this task is not reserved for individual persons or institutions.

In the short term only pragmatic, "little" solutions can be found. "Bigger" solutions will require not only coordination but also evaluation (identification of the demand, information and documentation, development of up-to-date study programmes, models for study organization and financing). In addition the funds required for demand-oriented study programmes can be made available in the medium term at best. All measures to be adopted would have to be oriented

- to the internal European market and to cooperation with European states outside the European Community;
- to the increased use of modern communication media.

2.1 Study materials and study courses

In the short term it is important to make available study materials from the former Federal Republic to East German higher education institutions in those disciplines which are in need of extra material or which have no material at all (e.g. social sciences, psychology, history, economics, legal sciences). It is particularly urgent to supply those distance students who are currently enrolled at East German higher education institutions and are planning to conclude their studies shortly.

Interested persons from the former GDR can enrol at an institution in the Federal Republic in order to gain access to study materials. Steps should be taken to provide study material not available at East German higher education institutions, if required. The latter would then have to decide whether to make such materials available for independent studies in libraries, existing consultation centres or directorates for continuing education and distance education or whether to use them as substitute or supplementary material as part of the curricula for study courses.

To produce a short-term effect, pragmatic solutions also for financing such measures would have to be found (e.g. advance financing by providers from the Federal Republic of Germany; provision free of charge in the framework of bilateral cooperation).

Also, grants towards purchasing equipment would be helpful, perhaps in the framework of special programmes run by the BMBW and/or in the framework of Land, city or university partnerships.

In the medium term the trend in the field of initial studies may be to make reciprocal use of study courses in both parts of Germany. The higher education institutions in the former GDR have a great wealth of distance study material to offer in particular in technical subjects.

The costs of new developments would have to be covered by providing "start-up money". Existing programmes could be used or perhaps restructured or expanded while some of them would have to be partly or even wholly redeveloped. Feasible funding models for day-to-day operation could be tested in the framework of pilot experiments.

Special programmes would have to be developed for continuing education for selected target groups (vocationally-oriented acquisition of qualifications by working adults, retraining, updating training, supplementary qualification, general continuing education). This should be done on a work-related basis.

Such target groups would be:

- multipliers in firms, at adult education institutions (pilot experiment "Continuing education for teachers in continuing education") and in the higher education sector

- engineers, judges, tax and insurance experts, labour administration staff

- teachers.

Syllabuses should, to begin with, contain subjects from the political and social sciences, the humanities, economics, ecology, the legal sciences, business administration. In keeping with the nature of continuing education, compact study programmes should be offered with final certificates.

For teacher in-service training (acquisition of advanced qualifications/additional training for secondary-level-one teachers to teach at higher grades, acquisition of competence in additional subjects, additional pedagogical qualifications for subject teachers with diplomas), a complex programme could be compiled on the basis of available distance education materials (e.g. of the Deutsches Institut für Fernstudien). In addition, it would have to be examined to what extent study materials available from the Land institutions for in-service training for teachers in the Federal Republic could be used for independent studies in the former GDR. In this way both subject-related (e.g. psychology, protestant and catholic theology) and interdisciplinary qualifications ("teaching and learning with the computer", "consultant teacher", basic knowledge of the humanities) could be acquired.

For the process of revising or redeveloping study material emphasis should be placed on the conceptual design of teaching and learning aids (didactic concept and printing quality of the printed texts sent to distance students). Audiovisual media to supplement study materials should be used more frequently. The existing potential for development in the former GDR (unused capacities on the part of teachers in higher education, the experience gained by the Zentralstelle für das Hochschulfern-studium) should be made use of.

Considering Europe as a whole there are opportunities to cooperate with European providers for the purposes of making available and/or improving existing study programmes and developing new independent ones (coordination of curricula, supervision during attendance phases, utilization of the study opportunities available in the framework of EC programmes). For this purpose the Federal Government and the Länder as well as the promotion institutions of the scientific community should invite research proposals to stimulate pertinent research activities.

2.2 Information and dissemination

The great variety of providers and the large number of study programmes that lend themselves to independent studies in particular in the former GDR call for information, documentation, and advice in the face of an equally complex demand side (university students, individuals interested in continuing education, higher education institutions, institutions offering training and continuing eduation, firms, etc.).

For a transitional period providers will use their own funds to make available their information material wherever there is demand or contact has been established. However, it is quite likely that interested persons will fail to use programmes offered because they are not familiar with the total supply and that higher education institutions will not be able to give sufficient advice.

In order to become independent of accidental factors, the total supply should be compiled and documented systematically (in the form of databases and catalogues); it would also be expedient to set up an information service for Germany as a whole. The Zentralstelle für das Hochschulfernstudium at Dresden could assume a special role here, involving for example the printing and dissemination of teaching materials.

In addition, higher education institutions, study centres and providers of distance education in both parts of Germany should be linked in a network; in this way, interested individuals and institutions could obtain information on the whole range of study courses available and would then be able to make informed educational decisions. Information on independent study programmes should be disseminated all over Europe.

2.3 Organization of studies

If we assume that in particular in the former GDR (but also on the whole) the significance of distance education for continuing education will increase greatly, then it will be necessary to conceive and test in pilot experiments new forms of study

organization which are in keeping in particular with the lifestyle and needs of gainfully employed people, also in a changed environment.

As the promotion measures concerning participation in academic distance education in the former GDR (in particular release from work for up to 48 work days) are discontinued in future, the organization of studies in the five new Länder will change in the short or medium term. The importance and duration of attendance phases will have to be adapted to changed general conditions; supervision and tutoring will presumably have to take place mostly in the evening and on weekends. To maintain the current system of distance education in the former GDR with its short cycles and high rates of success, and, if possible, to cut down on the duration of studies for normal students at the Fern-Universität, it will have to be examined to what extent specific release models could be developed for participation in attendance phases (e.g. educational leave).

It will be very important to establish a nationwide network of study centres. By setting up a central information and counselling agency it would be possible to provide information on independent study programmes and on distance education provided in the Federal Republic and in the former GDR, and study guidance and subject-specific provision could be offered (multi-functionality). Consultation centres existing in the former GDR (and the directorates for continuing education) should be incorporated into the advisory network.

In the medium term multifunctional study centres should be set up at all higher education institutions; if required, cooperation should be established with local providers of education (for example the adult education centres) in order to ensure local provision for participants. The work of these institutions should be coordinated in the individual Länder by a coordinating agency. Appropriate infrastructures could be developed and tested on the basis of the experience gained in the Federal Republic, for example in pilot projects. It should also be examined to what extent existing infrastructures, such as those at higher education institutions, would lend themselves to cooperation or co-utilization.

The multifunctional study centres should be equipped with communication media to such a degree that many different forms of utilization become possible. Such a step would include in particular the provision of work stations with personal computers and interactive videotex, the goal being to enable users to use information services, carry out independent searches in libraries, conduct dialogues with computer centres and obtain direct feedback on homework etc.). In the short term shortages in equipment are unavoidable. In the medium term such study-supporting media must, however, be available to meet the demands accompanying independent study and to comply with the standard achieved elsewhere in Europe (interactive learning systems, participation in the European computer network of the higher education institutions and in satellite broadcasting, etc.).

2.4 Cooperation

The bilateral contacts between individual teachers at higher education institutions, the institutions themselves and distance education organizations in both parts of Germany, which have already brought about a series of pragmatic solutions to individual problems, can be a basis for further initiatives. Cooperation between distance education organizations and higher education institutions should be put on a contractual basis.

Exchanges of guest scientists and cooperation among different higher education institutions in the field of independent study and distance education should receive promotion under the special programmes operated by the Federal and Länder governments. In addition, financial awards could also be obtained for cooperation from the EC Commission if specific requirements are fulfilled.

It will be necessary to coordinate development goals and to ensure systematic exchanges of experience. It is suggested that a forum be established where participating experts (scientists and representatives from the central organizations for distance education and continuing education) could hold regular exchanges and develop joint educational concepts. In the long run this forum should also be charged with the responsibility of looking after interests in this field throughout Europe

(representation in the EADTU, information concerning the utilization of EC promotion programmes, participation in media developments).

2.5 Educational policy and legal issues

As a result of the extension of the legal system of the "old" Federal Republic to the territory of the former GDR the five new Länder now have competence in the field of education, schools and higher education institutions. The Federation, the Länder and the higher education institutions are thus also in charge of the joint development of distance study (section 13 of the Framework Act for Higher Education).

- It has to be examined whether the new Länder should promote the sphere of independent studies and distance education either each on their own or jointly (for example under a state treaty). A decision on this issue will also determine to what extent academic distance education on the whole or at individual higher education institutions and participation in distance education will receive promotion.

- Distance studies and independent forms of learning and teaching should be a permanent task of higher education institutions because these educational tools will continue to be needed as demand for education measures as is expected.

- The many different legal and financial questions should be included in the current deliberations in the competent bodies at the earliest possible stage.

- Elements of the former GDR's higher education system which are likely to be of continuing value should, if possible, be retained. Such elements are in particular

- responsibility of higher education institutions and teachers at these institutions for direct and distance studies for both initial training and continuing education;

- preservation of the wide range of subjects available for distance education at East German higher education institutions;

- retention of the orientation to success of study models, which are characterized by a relatively short duration of studies, by compulsory attendance phases and by a phase of paid release from work;

- the possibility of transfer for graduates from advanced technical schools to the level of higher education for the purpose of earning a diploma.

It is recommended that transitional regulations be adopted for those distance students who are currently enrolled at East German higher education institutions. To maintain confidence on the part of these persons, periods of time for which the old study regulations will continue to be valid should be fixed and releases and financial support guaranteed to enable these students to complete their studies on a regular basis.

Recommendations should be made and incentives created (for example the possibility for providers of distance education to keep income, e.g. from fees, to carry out and develop their programmes) so that teachers at higher education institutions in the former GDR will be ready to commit themselves to continuing education and independent studies/distance education also in a changed environment.

One of the most important points that need to be clarified is the extent to which release provisions for gainfully employed persons (up to 48 days per year) previously granted in the former GDR for training purposes can be applied in the future, too. In order to avoid high drop-out rates and drastic drops in participation

in distance education, the organization of such studies should be handled flexibly and transitional provisions made as regards the funding system currently in force. It is recommended that the costs for grants and for the financing of the periods of absence from work, which, in the GDR, were in the past borne by the state alone, be shared from now on between firms, labour administrations, government and participants.

The following items also require regulation:

- the granting of benefits in the framework of the Labour Promotion Act

- the creation of possibilities for paid or unpaid educational leave for attendance phases and the establishment of rules for participation in continuing education programmes in employment contracts and collective bargaining agreements (for example, provision for flexible or shorter working hours for participants in continuing education)

- study grants (BAföG or other grants, for example company grants, foundation fellowships)

- legislation/statutory ordinances to fix higher education fees.

In the long run it has to be considered to what extent time for continuing education for workers could be found by organizing working hours more flexibly (for example by fixing an annual working time).